

HOMELESS VETERANS FINDING REFUGE AT NEW COMMUNITY



Nathaniel Lawrence in the kitchen of his apartment at NC Associates.

Nathaniel Lawrence, 55, a disabled, wheelchair-bound Vietnam-era veteran, was scrambling. He had been living with his brother, but things were not working out and he had to quickly find another place to live. Lawrence filled out numerous housing applications, but heard nothing back.

One day while at the Veterans Administration Hospital in East Orange, a nurse told him about New Community Corporation. He was put in touch with Madge Wilson, NCC's Outreach Coordinator. In less than a week, Lawrence had been placed in an apartment at NC Associates, one of New Community's six senior residences in Newark.

"Being in a wheelchair, things are a little difficult," he said. "She (Wilson) stepped right in, in the nick of time. She is a wonderful woman and went beyond the call of duty in doing her job."

But the help did not stop at ensur-

ing he received an apartment. Lawrence had no money to buy food once he settled into his 15th floor apartment at NC Associates, a well-maintained senior building at 180 South Orange Ave. New Community's Social Service Department stepped in and took care of his need.

"The next thing I know, people were coming in with bags of groceries. It was weird, because I normally send money overseas to help kids. To have somebody bringing me a food package... I didn't know how to take it, but it was a blessing," he said.

Dr. Michael Yudd, medical director of the dialysis unit at the Veterans Administration Hospital in East Orange, paid a personal visit to Monsignor William J. Linder, founder, president and CEO of New Community, to thank him and Madge Wilson for finding housing within the network for Lawrence and several

Contentment

"Contentment is natural wealth, luxury is artificial poverty."

Socrates

"Contentment is not the fulfillment of what you want, but the realization of how much you already have."

Unknown Source

"For I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content."

Philippians 4:11

"There is greatness in the fear of God, contentment in faith of God, and honour in humility."

Abu Bakr

"Content makes poor men rich; discontentment makes rich men poor."

Benjamin Franklin

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Dr. Michael Yudd, right, medical director of the Dialysis Unit at the Veterans Administration Hospital in East Orange, with NCC founder, president and CEO, Monsignor William J. Linder and Madge Wilson, Outreach Coordinator for New Community.

other homeless veterans.

"Madge Wilson was like an angel for these men," Yudd said. "The housing you provided was a godsend."

According to the VA New Jersey Healthcare System, there were 811 homeless veterans in the state of New Jersey as of last year. Douglas Coleman, 55, a dialysis patient at the East Orange hospital for veterans, recalled sharing with officials there that he had no where to go upon his release. He too was referred to New Community.

"Ms. Wilson came to the hospital and talked to me," said the Vietnam era veteran. "A couple of days later, she called and told me she had an apartment."

To Coleman's surprise, Wilson made sure his apartment, also located in the Newark senior building known as New Community Associates, was furnished.

"It's a blessing," he said.



Xavier Lake, a student enrolled at NCC's Community Hills Early Learning Center in Newark, was one of several children from throughout the network to take advantage of free dental screenings throughout Newark during a one-day event known as "Give Kids a Smile."

Sister Paula: One of "God's Angels" Returns Home



At Community Hills Early Learning Center, Sister Paula Rodrigo was known as a cheerful giver. At Christmas, she collected and distributed toys and at other times of the year gave away everything from food, clothing and school supplies to needy families.

"She was one of God's angels that was sent to help change everyone else's life for the better in the community and the school... She went out of her way to make sure my kids had what they needed in school or at home," recalled Ikeef Jenkins, a father of two sons, a 6-year-old who has already graduated from Community Hills and another, 5, who will be graduating this June.

Jenkins shared his memories of Sister Paula, a certified family development worker, during a moving memorial service held in her honor at the school last month. A member of the Sisters of Mary of Providence, Sister Paula passed away on Jan. 8, 2012 after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Born in Sri Lanka, she was 49.

Shortly after her death, the staff dedicated a bulletin board to her memory, featuring pictures and other memorabilia of Sister Paula's time at the school. Above it all is a headline which reads, "Touched By An Angel."

"Her door was always open to anyone and if you didn't walk in on your own, she would pull you in," continued Jenkins, the Community Hills father. "... She was more than a social worker, she was a caregiver, a friend and a confidant. I enjoyed the talks we used to have and her presence and her smile. I don't think she can be replaced, such a little lady with a giant heart."

Sister Paula was indeed small in stature, but her impact was larger than life, according to all who knew her. In addition to the work she did during the school day, she also visited the homes of students and also facilitated family conferences and community meetings.

LOYOLA STUDENTS SPEND THIER SPRING BREAK GIVING BACK



Students from Loyola University are seen here with NCC founder, president and CEO, Monsignor William J. Linder, center, back row, and Joseph Matara, far left in back row, New Community's chief operating officer.

Whether interacting with seniors or working with the homeless or preschool students, 11 students from Loyola University in Baltimore, Md. left New Community feeling like they had truly made a difference after spending their spring break with the Newark, New Jersey non-profit.

"It makes me so happy to see how New Community is making the lives of people better...I feel like I am a part of this community already," said Lindsey Rennie, 19, a freshman from Maryland studying political science, as she joined homeless children from NCC's Harmony House transitional living facility in games out on the playground.

For the week they were with New Community, the students resided in an apartment located in a senior high-rise, New Community Associates. In order to experience what it is like to survive on the type of budget that is reality to low-income families, pairs of students were given just \$25 to spend for the week on food. Yes, there were also planned luncheons for the students at various NCC facilities, but the budgeting exercise taught them some valuable lessons.

"It was tough going shopping for the two of us with \$25.00. I normally don't think about how I am spending, but I had to think about everything I was buying," said Kaitlyn Hammel, 20, a sophomore elementary education major from Pennsylvania.

One night she and her roommate had pasta and sauce, with bread, for dinner, while another evening it was peanut butter and banana sandwiches.

Throughout the week, the students immersed themselves

in every phase of New Community, helping out with clerical work, tutoring students and spending quality time with seniors. They also got to witness the staff at work. The Loyola students commented repeatedly on the dedication of everyone they met and the comprehensive and extensive nature of New Community's services.

"It opens a lot of doors for low income people," said Charles Cuthrell, 19, a communications major and native of Baltimore. "It gets people back on their feet and gives them a chance to grow."

"I'm just so impressed. It's such a big community and so extensive, creating opportunities for all types of people," added Jennifer LaFalce, a freshman from Little Egg Harbor, New Jersey.

During lunch one day with NCC Founder, Monsignor William J. Linder, and COO Joseph Matara at the St. Rose of Lima Rectory, the students learned more about how the organization was founded after the civil disturbances of 1967 to help rebuild the Central Ward of Newark.

They were very intrigued as well by the influence of Monsignor, who has traveled to places like Northern Ireland and Africa over the years, spreading his successful philosophy of community development, rubbing elbows with people like former President Bill Clinton and his wife, Hillary, along the way.

"They are very down to earth people," Monsignor told the students. "Hillary is just fantastic," he added, noting she once visited one of NCC's day care centers as First Lady.

"I am still amazed as to how big and how much good is being done for the people of Newark through New Community," said Sadye Alvarez, 20, a junior from New York City.



Loyola student Caroline Mills, right, talking with Ruth Hall in the NCC Adult Medical Day Care program.



Throughout New Community Corporation, the name "Madge Wilson" has become synonymous with "giving." Days after Christmas, Wilson is still wrapping gifts because she knows there are still children in need of everything from warm clothing to shoes. This has been her way of life for decades, ever since she was hired by New Community back in 1980, initially as manager of New Community's family and senior housing.

"I have a compassion for people," says Wilson, 78, now NCC's Outreach Coordinator, who recalls her own struggles as a single parent many years ago raising two children in Newark public housing. "I love people and that's my mission in life—to love people and help people."

In her own quiet way, Wilson has helped secure beautiful furniture sets from the wealthier Northern New Jersey suburbs for poor families and individuals in need. She also manages to find brand new bikes and beautiful dollhouses for the children of low-income parents who ordinarily would find it difficult to put toys under the Christmas tree.

Wilson has also been the point of contact for thousands of senior citizens in Newark who have sought her help over the years in obtaining needed social services like Meals on Wheels and home health aides.

"She is very kind and good-hearted. There is nothing she wouldn't do for you if she could do it," said Patricia Hulon, a resident of Manor Senior, recalling how Wilson helped her when she was ill.

Inez Griffin, a resident of NC Douglas Homes in Newark, said she will never forget how Wilson came to her rescue when she needed furniture for her apartment. Griffin, 42, who is disabled, moved into the building a little over a year ago after relocating to New Jersey from Texas.

Those who know her say Madge Wilson has a smile that lights up a dark room, while her personality is genuinely warm and caring. One admirer even nicknamed her the "Missionary's Missionary" because she has devoted her entire life to the heavenly task of serving others. Her energy level is incredible and she accomplishes more in one day than many people half her age.

"She went above and beyond to do for me," Griffin said of Wilson. "She is a very beautiful person with a beautiful spirit. Being on a fixed income, I would never have been able to afford the type of furniture she was able to get for me. She put the peace and serenity back into my life."

Wilson's outreach efforts also include partnering with organizations like the local chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women to ensure New Community children have back-to-school supplies like book bags, notebooks, footwear and coats. Van loads of New Community children take advantage of the council's free Back to School store annually, thanks to Wilson.

She has always been passionate about children and was one of the founding members, in 1969, of Newark's Babyland Nursery, which was for many years the largest day-care operation in the state of New Jersey, serving more than 600 children. Wilson was key in attracting women from the suburbs into Newark, an operation dubbed "Operation Housewives," to help establish Babyland, which was then a separately incorporated entity of New Community.

"Whatever the task, I give my 100 percent and more," she said. "I knew that when I came to New Community, I would be here forever."

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